

PHIL 344 | How to Become What you Are: The Art of Living in the Network Society. Spring 2025

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Course Description

This seminar delves into the ever-evolving landscape of new media. We will explore:

- **The Core of New Media:** We'll define the defining characteristics of new media, contrasting it with traditional forms of communication.
- **Shaping Our World:** We'll examine the social and political implications of new media, exploring how it impacts our interactions and global processes.
- **Technology's Impact:** We'll analyze the intricate relationship between new media technologies, politics, and globalization.
- **Living in the Network Society:** We'll uncover how new media influences daily life, including concepts like interactivity and simulation.
- **Theories and Economies:** We'll unpack theories surrounding interactivity and the new media economy, considering factors like cybernetics and cyberculture.
- **A Historical Look:** We'll delve into the history of automata and artificial life, providing context for the rise of new media.

By the end of this seminar, you'll gain the tools to critically analyze the cultural impact of new media. You'll be able to understand how the digital age shapes our interactions, institutions, and even our identities.

Course Approach

1. Exploration of Key Course Topics, Issues, and Questions

In this seminar, we will explore the dynamic relationship between individuals and the evolving landscape of new media. Key topics and questions will be approached through a mix of readings, case studies, and interactive methodologies:

- **Reading Assignments:** We will begin by analyzing foundational texts on new media theory, such as Marshall McLuhan, Lev Manovich, and Sherry Turkle, as well as contemporary analyses of digital culture and its societal implications. These readings will help us define the core elements of new media and contrast them with traditional communication forms, focusing on interactivity, simulation, and cyberculture.
- **Case Studies:** Real-life examples of social media, virtual reality, and other digital platforms will be used to explore the impact of new media on identity, social relations, and politics. Case studies will connect theoretical concepts to the lived experiences of individuals within the network society, enabling students to reflect on the consequences of these technologies on a global scale.
- **Multimedia and Digital Resources:** Students will engage with digital media—such as blog posts, social media platforms, interactive websites, and virtual simulations. By using new media tools themselves, students will gain firsthand experience of the interactivity and participation that define the digital age.
- **Class Discussions and Debates:** Weekly discussions will allow students to critically analyze the theories surrounding new media, particularly focusing on its political, cultural, and economic dimensions. Topics such as the control of information, the new media economy, and the implications of constant interconnectivity will be central to our debates.
- **Film and Documentaries:** We will screen select films and documentaries that portray the evolution of media, the rise of cyberculture, and the increasing influence of digital platforms on society. These visual resources will spark in-depth discussions on how new media technologies shape individual and collective experiences.
- **Historical Context:** To ground our understanding, we will take a historical look at automata, artificial life, and earlier technological advancements, offering context for the rise of new media. We will analyze how earlier innovations in media and technology paved the way for today's network society.

2. Development of Key Academic Skills

- **Critical Analysis of Texts and Theories:** Through close reading of key theoretical works, students will develop critical thinking skills by analyzing and interpreting various perspectives on new media. This will help them understand complex ideas such as cybernetics, cyberculture, and the political economy of new media.
- **Writing Assignments:** Students will work on diverse written assignments, from analytical essays to reflective responses on how new media shapes personal identity and social interactions. These exercises will encourage critical engagement with course material and provide opportunities to develop coherent, structured arguments.
- **Research Skills:** Independent research will be a major component of the course, with students investigating specific aspects of new media—such as the digital economy, political manipulation via social networks, or the cultural effects of globalization. Research projects will require students to integrate theoretical knowledge with empirical case studies.
- **Oral Presentations:** Students will be asked to present their research or case study findings, developing their public speaking and presentation skills. Presentations will also serve as catalysts for class discussions, allowing peers to engage with each other's perspectives and offer constructive feedback.
- **Digital Media Interpretation:** In addition to traditional academic readings, students will engage with digital texts, social media artifacts, and online communities, developing media literacy and critical evaluation skills. This will enable students to analyze how digital platforms shape meaning and public discourse.

3. Collaborative and Individual Learning

- **Pair Work and Group Discussions:** Students will often work in pairs or small groups to analyze case studies or explore key concepts, encouraging collaborative learning and diverse viewpoints. For instance, small group discussions might focus on analyzing the cultural impact of social media influencers or the ethical challenges of surveillance technologies.
- **Class Debates:** Structured debates will be held on controversial issues, such as the effects of new media on democratic processes or the commodification of personal data. Debates will foster the development of rhetorical and argumentative skills, as students will need to articulate and defend their viewpoints while considering opposing perspectives.
- **Collaborative Projects:** Students will work together on group projects where they investigate specific aspects of new media's role in shaping identity or society. These projects will encourage collaborative research and teamwork, culminating in presentations to the class. Peer feedback and group discussions will enhance the learning process.
- **Individual Research and Reflection:** Throughout the course, students will be encouraged to reflect on how their personal interactions with new media shape their own identity and worldview. Independent research papers will allow them to explore specific interests within the broader themes of the course, fostering a deeper, individual engagement with the material.

By employing a range of methodologies—textual analysis, case studies, digital media exploration, and group collaboration—students will develop a critical understanding of the cultural and political implications of living in the network society. The course will not only deepen their grasp of new media theory but also equip them with the tools to navigate and critically assess the digital world that shapes our modern lives.

Learning Objectives

This course offers students conceptual frameworks for thinking through a range of key issues which have arisen over two decades of speculation on the cultural consequences of new media. It helps students to understand themselves as thinking acting beings, as well as the digital world they inhabit and their relation to each other. The students will develop skills that will allow them to use new media in order to communicate their ideas in an original and powerful way. They will also acquire skills that will enable them to think carefully, critically, and with clarity, take a logical approach to addressing challenging questions and examining hard issues, reason well and evaluate the reasoning of others. The students will learn how to critically examine their own views as well as those of others and discuss sensibly. The course will enhance their problem-solving capacities, their ability to organize ideas and issues and their ability to distinguish what is essential from what is not. In doing so this course will not only be a valuable preparation for any career, but it also will be important for life as a whole, beyond the knowledge and skills required for any particular profession preparation, contributing to an enhanced intellectual, political, and social existence.

Course Requirements

- 1. Class Participation:** I am a strong believer in relating arguments from political philosophers to contemporary political controversies and examples, especially when they were themselves politically engaged. In my opinion this accomplishes two objectives: First, it usually sparks your interest in the theoretical arguments of the different thinkers. Second, a well-chosen example can help you grasp what are often abstract and difficult arguments. Connecting thinkers' arguments to contemporary issues can help you see that these arguments are not merely of historical interest. For the above reasons I often will ask you to think about how one philosopher might respond on a topic and then ask you to marshal arguments or examples in favour of one position or the other (or in favour of some synthesis of the two positions). Hoping to make my lectures more participatory I will break you up in groups asking you to evaluate each other's presentations, to defend different positions and to vote on controversial issues.
- 2. Weekly Reflections:** You will be asked to turn in one weekly 1-2 pages free report or reaction to the discussion of the last class that will be delivered to my email address before the next class. The reports will not be graded separately. You will be graded just for turning them all in on time. You will get an A+ if you've turned them all in on time and an F if there are more than two reports unjustifiably missing or written in such a manner as to convey that the reading was not actually done. Please paste your reflection in the main body of the email, not in an attachment and send to theofanis.tasis@cyathens.org
- 3. Home Assignments and Presentations:** You will be asked to present a philosophical text and prepare questions for a discussion in class.
- 4. Papers:** You will be asked to write a final paper of 2000 to 2500 words max. The particulars of the process will be discussed in class. Guidelines for writing a paper will be discussed in class as we move on and you turn in more reading reports. Paper topics will be selected freely by you, after prior consultation with me.

There will be no midterm and final exams for this class.

Estimate course workload by using the estimator: 2.18 out of class hrs/wk

Evaluation and Grading

Assessment Distribution:

Class participation: 20% of the grade.

Weekly reflections 10% of the grade. (Completion Requirement)

Home assignments and presentations: 40% of the grade. (Completion Requirement)

Final paper: 30% of the grade.

Deadline for submission: 12.5.2025

Policy on Assignments and make-up Work

- Assignment Deadlines:** Details about homework assignments and presentations will be provided well in advance of their due dates. Deadlines are important to ensure fairness and manage time effectively. Late assignments will generally not be accepted.
- Extension Requests:** If a significant and unforeseen issue may prevent you from submitting an assignment on time, please contact me as soon as possible and before the deadline. If the reason is justified, we may work out an alternative plan.
- Absences:** If you know you will be absent on the day of your presentation, notify me immediately. Depending on circumstances, we may reschedule or arrange for an alternate way for you to present your work. Unexcused absences for presentations will result in a grade reduction.
- Communication:** Open communication is important. If you have any concerns about assignments, deadlines, or your ability to complete work, please speak to me as early as possible.

Evaluation Criteria - Course Assignments

Assignment 1: Class Participation (20%)

- Criteria 1: Engagement with Philosophical Arguments**
Students will be evaluated on their ability to actively engage with philosophical arguments in discussions and relate them to contemporary political issues. Quality of contributions, critical thinking, and demonstration of understanding will be key.
- Criteria 2: Group Work and Collaboration**
Students' participation in group activities will be assessed by their collaboration, willingness to evaluate and defend positions, and respectful interaction with peers during debates and discussions.
- Criteria 3: Presentation and Defense of Ideas**
Students will be graded on how effectively they present and defend arguments within their group and in class-wide debates. This includes clarity of thought, structure of argumentation, and use of relevant examples.

Assignment 2: Weekly Reflections (20%)

- **Criteria 1: Completion and Timeliness**
Reflections will be evaluated based on whether they are submitted on time and consistently for each class. Turning in all reflections punctually will ensure a higher grade.
- **Criteria 2: Engagement with Class Discussions**
Reflections must demonstrate engagement with the prior class's discussions. While not graded for content, a reflection that shows clear attention to the material and thoughtful commentary will be necessary for full credit.
- **Criteria 3: Quality of Writing and Reflection**
Even though these reflections are free-form, they should still be coherent and clearly written, showing that the student has engaged with both the reading and the class discussions.

Assignment 3: Home Assignments and Presentations (30%)

- **Criteria 1: Comprehension of Philosophical Texts**
Presentations will be assessed based on how well the student understands the assigned philosophical text and conveys its core arguments and ideas in their own words.
- **Criteria 2: Preparation of Thoughtful Discussion Questions**
Students will be evaluated on the quality of questions they prepare for class discussion. Questions should demonstrate deep engagement with the text and foster critical dialogue.
- **Criteria 3: Clarity and Effectiveness of Presentation**
The effectiveness of the presentation will be judged by the clarity of explanation, ability to engage the audience, and how well the student leads the discussion through their prepared questions.

Assignment 4: Final Paper (30%)

- **Criteria 1: Originality and Critical Thinking**
The final paper will be assessed based on how original and insightful the student's thesis and argumentation are. Critical engagement with the chosen topic, demonstrating independent thought, will be key.
- **Criteria 2: Coherence and Structure**
Papers will be graded on their logical coherence, clear structure, and how effectively they present and develop their arguments. A strong introduction, body, and conclusion are essential.
- **Criteria 3: Use of Philosophical Texts and Sources**
Students must engage with relevant philosophical texts and incorporate them into their argument in a meaningful way. Proper citation and integration of sources will also be part of the evaluation.
- **Criteria 4: Writing Style and Technical Accuracy**
Papers should be well-written, with proper grammar, punctuation, and adherence to academic writing standards. Clarity of expression and a polished final draft are important for a higher grade.

CYA Regulations and Accommodations

Attendance Policy

CYA regards attendance in class and on-site (in Athens or during field study trips) as essential. Absences are recorded and have consequences.

ePolicy on Original Work

Unless otherwise specified, all submitted work must be your own original work. Any ideas taken from the work of others must be clearly identified as quotations, paraphrases, summaries, figures etc., and accurate internal citations and/or captions (for visuals) as well as an accompanying bibliography must be provided.

Use of Laptops

In-class or onsite use of laptops and other devices is permitted if this facilitates course-related activities such as note-taking, looking up references, etc. Laptop or other device privileges will be suspended if devices are not used for class-related work.

Class Schedule
Spring 2025 Tentative Schedule

Day #	Date/Day	Topic / Readings / Assignments Due / Place (if applicable)
1	Jan 28	How to live differently: On democracy and mortality I Reading: Hannah Arendt, <i>The human condition</i> , Ch. 1, (pp. 7-22) and Hannah Arendt, <i>Philosophy and Politics, Social Research</i> , 57:1 (1990:Spring), (pp.73- 103).
2	Jan 30	How to live differently: On democracy and mortality II Reading: Hannah Arendt, <i>The human condition</i> , Ch. 1, (pp. 7-22) and Hannah Arendt, <i>Philosophy and Politics, Social Research</i> , 57:1 (1990:Spring), (pp.73- 103).
3	Feb 4	Philosophy as an art of living: Socrates and the care of the self I Reading: Michel Foucault, <i>The hermeneutics of the subject: lectures at the Collège de France, 1981-1982</i> , (pp.25-81).
4	Feb 6	Philosophy as an art of living: Socrates and the care of the self II Reading: Michel Foucault, <i>The hermeneutics of the subject: lectures at the Collège de France, 1981-1982</i> , (pp.25-81).
5	Feb 11	Politics of truth: On parrhesia I Reading: Michel Foucault, <i>The government of self and others: lectures at the Collège de France, 1982-1983</i> , (pp.187-223).
6	Feb 13	Politics of truth: On parrhesia II Reading: Michel Foucault, <i>The government of self and others: lectures at the Collège de France, 1982-1983</i> , (pp.187-223).
	Feb 18-21	FS Peloponnese
7	Feb 25	Socrates in the Agora: Philosophy as practice of parrhesia I Reading: Michel Foucault, <i>The government of self and others: lectures at the Collège de France, 1982-1983</i> , (pp.285-336) and (pp.339-357).
8	Feb 27	Socrates in the Agora: Philosophy as practice of parrhesia II Reading: Michel Foucault, <i>The government of self and others: lectures at the Collège de France, 1982-1983</i> , (pp.285-336) and (pp.339-357).
9	Mar 4	Socrates' testament: Care of the self and politics Reading: Michel Foucault, <i>The courage of truth (the government of self and others II): lectures at the Collège de France, 1983-1984</i> , (pp.73-117).
10	Mar 6	Socrates' testament: Care of the self and politics II Reading: Michel Foucault, <i>The courage of truth (the government of self and others II): lectures at the Collège de France, 1983-1984</i> , (pp.73-117).
	Mar 10-13	Midterm Exams
	Mar 18-22	FS Northern Greece Thessaloniki
	Mar 25	Greek Independence day
11	Mar 27	The radical life of the Cynic: Philosophy as an art of living in the public sphere Reading: Michel Foucault, <i>The courage of truth (the government of self and others II): lectures at the Collège de France, 1983-1984</i> , (pp.231-291).
14	Mar 28	The radical life of the Cynic: Philosophy as an art of living in the public sphere II Reading: Michel Foucault, <i>The courage of truth (the government of self and others II): lectures at the Collège de France, 1983-1984</i> , (pp.231-291).
15	April 1	In search of meaning: Digital subject and information technologies Reading: Manuel Castells, <i>The Rise of the Network Society, The Information Age: Economy, Society and Culture Vol. I. (Second edition)</i> , (pp. 1- 75).
16	April 3	In search of meaning: Digital subject and information technologies II Reading: Manuel Castells, <i>The Rise of the Network Society, The Information Age: Economy, Society and Culture Vol. I. (Second edition)</i> , (pp. 1- 75).
17	April 8	Money makes the world go around: The network economy Reading: Manuel Castells, <i>The Rise of the Network Society, The Information Age: Economy, Society and Culture Vol. I. (Second edition)</i> , (pp. 77-163).
18	April 9	Money makes the world go around: The network economy II Reading: Manuel Castells, <i>The Rise of the Network Society, The Information Age: Economy, Society and Culture Vol. I. (Second edition)</i> , (pp. 77-163).
	April 11-21	Spring Recess (Orthodox Easter April 20)
19	April 22	Money makes the world go around: The network economy III

Day #	Date/Day	Topic / Readings / Assignments Due / Place (if applicable)
		Reading: Manuel Castells, <i>The Rise of the Network Society, The Information Age: Economy, Society and Culture Vol. I. (Second edition)</i> , (pp. 77-163).
20	April 24	Self@? Identities in the network society Reading: Manuel Castells, <i>The Power of Identity, The Information Age: Economy, Society and Culture Vol. II. (Second edition)</i> , (pp. 192-303).
21	April 29	Self@? Identities in the network society II Reading: Manuel Castells, <i>The Power of Identity, The Information Age: Economy, Society and Culture Vol. II. (Second edition)</i> , (pp. 192-303).
22	May 6	The new Polis: Democracy in the network society Reading: Manuel Castells, <i>The Power of Identity, The Information Age: Economy, Society and Culture Vol. II. (Second edition)</i> , (pp. 367-429).
23	May 8	The new Polis: Democracy in the network society II Reading: Manuel Castells, <i>The Power of Identity, The Information Age: Economy, Society and Culture Vol. II. (Second edition)</i> , (pp. 367-429).
	May 13	Final Exam Week
	May 15	Final Exam Week

COURSE BIBLIOGRAPHY

- Hannah Arendt, *The human condition*, The University of Chicago Presse, 1958.
- Hannah Arendt, *Philosophy and Politics, Social Research*, 57:1 (1990: Spring).
- Manuel Castells, *The Rise of the Network Society, The Information Age: Economy, Society and Culture Vol. I. (Second edition)*, Wiley-Blackwell, 2000.
- Manuel Castells, *The Power of Identity, The Information Age: Economy, Society and Culture Vol. II. (Second edition)*, Wiley-Blackwell, 2009.
- Michel Foucault, *The hermeneutics of the subject: lectures at the Collège de France, 1981-1982*, Picador, 2005.
- Michel Foucault, *The government of self and others: lectures at the Collège de France, 1982-1983*, Picador, 2011.
- Michel Foucault, *The courage of truth (the government of self and others II): lectures at the Collège de France, 1983-1984*, Picador, 2012.
- Euny Hong, *The birth of the cool: How one nation is conquering the world through pop culture*, Picador, 2014.